



IFES Quarterly Report: April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2005

Guinea: Technical Assistance to the CNE
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC A-00-01-000400

Project Period: June 12, 2002 – December 31, 2003*

Total Budget: \$200,000 Expenses Recorded to Date: \$66,238

* on 6/29/2005 IFES submitted a narrative and accompanying budget for approval to reactivate this activity.

Results Summary

- Discussed with members of the international community and Guinean stakeholders the status of the electoral environment and potential avenues for assistance to the electoral process.
- Submitted a reprogramming request to USAID Guinea for the remainder of funds under this agreement.

Background

Three major opposition parties (UFR, RPG, and UPG) continue to boycott the political dialogue process on the grounds that existing laws are not applied, the administration is not neutral, the airwaves have not been liberalized, there is no equal access to state media, and opposition members have difficulty organizing meetings. However, one of the “radical” opposition parties and member of the FRAD (Front pour l’Alternance Démocratique), UFDG, led by Ba Mamadou, has decided to join the dialogue on the basis that the government has shown some progress toward liberalization. Parties began negotiating certain themes relating to the electoral process, such as: the establishment of an independent electoral management body, transparent ballot boxes, single ballot, and electoral observation. There is controversy surrounding these upcoming elections vis-à-vis articles 88, 89, and 90 of the Constitution which were revised by referendum in 2001, stating that the district mayors and *Chefs de quartier* are nominated by the government and no longer elected by the people (jeopardizing the decentralization process at its core). The Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MATD), Kiridi Bangoura, however, assures that laws are currently being drafted that will clarify this issue in favor of the decentralization process.

There is much progress to be made in the discussions before parties can agree first amongst themselves and then reconcile with the government. In the meantime, the MATD decreed that an exceptional revision of the electoral list would take place from April 29-May 30. Dissident opposition parties considered the discussion and decision concerning the revision of the electoral list as premature, since the process had not been negotiated. They refused to have representatives on the commissions set up for the revision, as stipulated in the electoral code, yet they encouraged their members to register.

On April 29, the MATD officially announced that the election scheduled for June would not take place until the end of the year. The Prime Minister also stated in an interview that elections will take place only if all political parties participate, putting the pressure on those opposition parties that are still absent from the dialogue process. The EU plans to finance the election up to 1.9 million Euros, but this aid is conditional to the establishment of an

independent/autonomous electoral commission and the liberalization of the airwaves. Although a draft decree for the liberalization of the airwaves was signed by the members of government in the presence of President Lansana Conté, it has to be signed by the President himself before it is effective.

Two new opposition political forces appeared in the last month. The AFIA party created by Dr. Sadiou Bella Diallo, a former leader of the UPR (Union pour le Progrès et le Renouveau) which is currently the only major opposition party represented at the National Assembly. In addition, Louceiny Fall, the former prime minister, announced the venue for his new party. These developments altered the political scene considerably, weakening the UPR and announcing the emergence of new forces in the race for Conté's succession.

Political parties, civil society organizations and members of the administration met on Gorée Island in June to discuss the electoral process in light of the upcoming election. The meeting was another attempt to establish consensual views on the electoral system, similar to the efforts at the Kassa roundtable in April 2004, which was facilitated by IFES. The Gorée workshop was also a way to get all the major stakeholders together around a table in a dialogue process, which has not been possible in Conakry.

Overall, the past couple of months in Guinea have shown timid progress in the political dialogue process and the push for reform.

Program Activities

IFES Country Director Elizabeth Côté met with the secretary general of the MATD on March 24 to discuss potential IFES support to the upcoming communal elections in Guinea, slated for the late fall. The secretary general informed IFES that they were no longer considering a complete reconfiguration of the electoral list. Instead they were planning what they call an "exceptional revision." He stated that in lieu of exterior expertise on the project, the MATD would prefer financial support that would allow them to deploy a higher number of revision commissions to supervise the process throughout the country. In answer to a request by MATD Minister Kiridi Bangoura, IFES prepared a concept paper on the potential training of the sous-préfets, préfets and governors in matters relating to rights, responsibilities and the electoral process, to which there was no conclusive response.

IFES also received a request in writing from the UFR, one of Guinea's main political parties to train political party members on the electoral process. This request was then discussed with IFES CSO partners and four other parties, which later led to the organization of training workshops in Guinea's eight administrative regions.

Under IFES' current civil society program, a debriefing seminar was held in May to present the results of the national civic education campaign. Along with the international community, members of government and the donor community, the top leaders of each of the major political parties attended the meeting. The debriefing seminar brought to light some of the issues and concerns of the population regarding their political leaders. As a result, IFES developed the concept for a tour of political party leaders throughout the administrative regions of the country to participate together in a series of Town Hall meetings with the population. Preparatory meetings took place with political party representatives to identify the format and content of these meetings. Three main issues were identified: the role of political

parties in a liberal environment, the role of the State in a multi-party system, and rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the role of civil society. The concept was presented in the form of a reprogramming request to USAID under this agreement.